

Burunge language

Burunge is an Afro-Asiatic language spoken in Tanzania in the Dodoma Region, by the Burunge people, a small "group" of about 13,000 native speakers that live in the Northeastern region of Tanzania. The Burunge belong to a cluster of Tanzanian groups known as Southern Cushites, which also categorizes Burunge as part of the South Cushitic language family.^[3] The Burunge live in close proximity to other languages such as the Rangi, Gogo and Sandawe, and ultimately, their language and culture is endangered by dwindling number of speakers and absorption by larger tribes.

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Name

Burunge is a language spoken by a clan of peoples of the same name, and it belongs to a larger "Cushtic" language family which is one of the most largest and most important in East Africa. Thirty million people in the region trace their native language back to the Cushitic language family.^[3]

Burunge has various alternate names: Bulunge, Burunga Iso, Burungee, Burungi, Kiburunge, Mbulungi, Mbulungwe. Burunge has no known dialects, but it does share a high similarity with the Alagwa language - a different Cushitic language spoken in the same Dodoma Region as Burunge.

History

The modern use of the term "Cushite" is used to describe the cultural descendants of ancient cultures in northeastern Africa. The heritage of these descendants is traced back through languages that are descended from their ancient ancestors. Thus, the term "Cushite" is a linguistic grouping rather than a racial or cultural designation.^[4] This method of characterization allows for a more clear cut historical lineage than just identifying by cultural groups. Therefore, peoples of Cushite heritage are those who speak languages of the Cushite grouping of the Afro-Asiatic family, and as a result of this categorization or clustering on the basis of language, the Cushitic peoples can exhibit diverse physical and racial features.

The Burunge belong to the Southern Cushites in Tanzania; their ancestors are believed to have originated from Southern Ethiopia and migrated into the northeastern region of Tanzania around 1000 BC. After migration into Tanzania, the ancient Burunge culture centered on subsistence farming and cattle grazing.

Burunge	
Native to	Tanzania
Region	Dodoma Region
Ethnicity	30,000 Burunge (2007) ^[1]
Native speakers	13,000 (2002) ^[1]
Language family	Afro-Asiatic <ul style="list-style-type: none">Cushitic<ul style="list-style-type: none">South Cushitic<ul style="list-style-type: none">West Rift<ul style="list-style-type: none">Burunge
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	bds
Glottolog	buru1320 (http://glottolog.org/resource/language/id/buru1320) ^[2]

Although the Burunge originally came from the region of what is now Ethiopia, there is a marked difference between the languages of the Southern Cushites in Tanzania and the Cushites of Southern Ethiopia which suggests that a long period of isolation and linguistic differentiation has occurred between the Burunge migration and present day.

Land

Burunge native speakers are native to northeastern Tanzania, in the Kondoa district of the Dodoma region, southeast of the Langi, Goima, Chambalo, and Mirambu villages.^[5] The land in this region is generally described as scattered brush, and the Burunge have historically used the land for farming and cattle grazing and watering. In more recent times this has changed as land has been privatized in order to form Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) - these are areas that are to be used solely for wildlife conservation, and as such are off limits to farmers who used to graze and water their livestock in these areas.^[6] As a result of the formation of the Wildlife Management Areas, and the close proximity to Tarangire National Park, most of the land in this area is used for tourism safaris.

Present Day

Burunge both as a language and distinct designation of peoples are in danger of disappearing as a result of the dominance of Swahili in Tanzania, the small population of Burunge speakers, and also the Burunge clan of approximately thirteen thousand being absorbed into stronger, more populous clans. The Rangi is one such clan; they are a neighboring clan with their own specific language, and not only do they have a larger population than the Burunge, they are also more economically advantaged. The Rangi have subgroup "clubs" within their clan, that male members of the Burungee can officially join to become a member of the Rangi clan. Once someone is a member, they have to shed their identity as a Burunge and become completely Rangi by marrying a Rangi woman and raising their children as Rangi.^[7] Many Burunge have joined the Rangi this way over the past few decades, so it is unclear if Burunge as a people and language group will continue to exist as a distinct and separate culture, as the new generations born of both Burunge and Rangi heritage will be seen as and taught only Rangi language and culture.

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